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PRESS RELEASE

U.S. AMBASSADOR JAMES F. MORIARTY'S PRESS STATEMENT FOLLOWING HIS VISIT TO SIDR-AFFECTED AREAS IN SHARANKHOLA

DHAKA, JUNE 23 -- U.S. Ambassador James F. Moriarty made the following remarks after visiting Sidr-affected areas at Sharankhola in Bagerhat district today:

(Begin Text)

Assalamu alaykum and good afternoon. I am pleased to be here in Shahrakhola. This is my first trip to the Sidr-affected areas. I have come across many brave individuals throughout the day and I am honored to meet such heroes in the face of adversity. I extend my heartfelt sympathy to families who lost their loved ones during the cyclone and to those whose lives and homes were affected.

Bangladesh is been an important ally and a friend to America. The U.S. has a longstanding relationship with Bangladesh and has provided more than 5 billion U.S. dollars in aid since its independence. Our annual assistance programs average \$100 million. We plan to continue this strong bond of friendship and work with the government of Bangladesh in helping it progress towards a better more prosperous future.

The response to cyclone Sidr demonstrates the strong bond of friendship between the US and Bangladesh. In response to cyclone Sidr and worldwide price hikes, we have doubled our food aid this year. In the period immediately following the cyclone, the US provided \$19.5 million in emergency assistance and logistical support to get desperately needed emergency supplies to the devastated area. In addition to our regular food aid program (about \$48 million in 2008) which operates in 3,500 remote and vulnerable villages in Char, haor, and coastal regions this year, an additional \$30 million in

emergency food aid has gone to Cyclone Sidr affected areas. I was very pleased to be in Chittagong in May when the USS Liberty Eagle arrived, bringing about nearly 50 thousand metric tons of American grain to Bangladesh to help in the food security of this country.

I am also very pleased to announce a new USAID grant to Helen Keller International for \$100,000 which will be used to fund new activities in nutrition in the Cyclone Sidr-affected region.

The United States and Bangladesh share a keen interest in advancing what I have termed the “three D’s” of our bilateral relationship. I believe promoting democracy, ensuring development and denying space to terrorism are key challenges which Bangladesh faces. The United States will remain a close partner to the people of Bangladesh in each of these areas.

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#As prepared for delivery

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Note: A Bangla translation of this article is also available at the American Center. If you are interested in the translation, please call the American Center Press Section, Tel: 8837150-4, Fax: 9885688; e-mail: DhakaPA@state.gov; Website: <http://dhaka.usembassy.gov>